

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please insert the following paragraph before the first line on page 1:

This application is a continuation of Application No. 09/479,549, filed January 7, 2000, pending, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

Page 6, please amend the paragraph beginning on line 3 as follows:

U.S. Patent No. 4,672,892 ~~4,671,892~~, incorporated by reference herein, describes an apparatus for conveying and marking pellet-shaped pieces by utilizing two printing heads positioned along an arcuate transfer path about a transfer drum so as to apply single color indicia to opposite sides of the pellets. U.S. Patent No. 5,423,252, incorporated by reference herein, describes a capsule or tablet (article) printer in which a vacuum is applied below a transporting belt to vacuum holes provided in article receiving pockets. In one embodiment, a first printing unit 110 prints on one side of the article, and another printing unit 110' prints on a second side of the article. However, there is no disclosure of applying a vacuum at and between the first and second printing units, registering the printing between the first and second sides of the article, or of the particular vacuum holes, or carrier bars.

Please amend the paragraph bridging pages 31 and 32, as follows:

Recesses 401 are adapted to facilitate loading of pieces 420. Pieces can be dropped from a hopper and urged to the proper position relative to the recesses. Methods to distribute

pieces to a consistent position in an array are described in U.S. Patent Nos. 5,433,146, 5,768,996, ~~5,863,243~~ 5,836,243, 5,655,453, and 5,630,499. Such urging can [[be]] also include any convenient method such as by vibrating, brushing, or by the action of a designed geometry of the hopper and the receiving transport surface. After piece 420 is in the proper position, vacuum is applied to firmly secure piece 420 to element 400.